



A MUCH NEEDED CELEBRATION

June 10, 2018
Pastor Randy

INTRO:

We continue our study in the book of Nehemiah; we will plan two more weeks in this study. Chronologically speaking, Nehemiah would be the final book of the Old Testament, before 400 years of prophetic silence.

It's sometimes easier to default to the physical challenges in front of us, like the rebuilding of the wall. But God is always doing something deeper and bigger. He is restoring our hearts, our relationships etc. His goal for the people here in Nehemiah's time, is renewing the faith of a broken down people. Sitting in the shadow of ruins, it's easy to think, "this is how it will always be".

We must understand faith doesn't deny the facts; Nehemiah went at night to get a true assessment of the situation. But what seems impossible, is made possible because God was in their midst. It's no different for us, as we make ourselves available, to do what he has called us to do according to his will and purpose.

The people had repented and cried before the Lord; now Nehemiah saw an opportunity, an opportunity to celebrate as a nation.

MAIN TEXTS:

""So the wall was completed in 52 days. When all our enemies heard about this, all the surrounding nations were afraid and they lost their self-confidence. Because they realized that this work had been done with the help of our great God." (Nehemiah 6:15-16)

The whole company that had returned from exile built temporary shelters and lived in them. From the days of Joshua son of Nun until that day, the Israelites had not celebrated it like this. And their joy was very great." (Nehemiah 8:17)

"At the dedication of the wall of Jerusalem, the Levites were sought out from where they lived and were brought to Jerusalem to celebrate joyfully the dedication with songs of thanksgiving and with the music of cymbals, harps and lyres." (Nehemiah 12:27)

So we have to ask ourselves, how important is celebration? Many times it is a marking of a significant occasion or time. Nehemiah was a good leader. Instead of jumping on a chance to "keep the momentum going", he stopped everything. He marked the accomplishment and initiated a celebration.

We can't underestimate what celebration does to the human heart.

In the O.T., we see 12 celebrations, festivals, etc., that God commanded. In fact, in Deuteronomy 14, the people are commanded to, above the tithe, put resources aside to fund the celebrations.

In the N.T., Jesus first miracle was turning the water into wine; this, of course, was at a wedding celebration. During his ministry, the biggest accusation against Jesus was that he was a "glutton and a drunkard" ...today they would say; "you're going to too many parties"!

As we read about our eternal future in Revelation 19 and elsewhere the first big event that we see in Heaven will be all about a wedding feast. It will be the marriage banquet of the lamb and his bride, full of food and drink, guest...a joyful celebration. Thankfully we have a place at the table because we've been invited by Jesus.

We live in a very "heavy" time and season. There have always been sorrows, wars etc., but because of our 24 hour a day information, it just continually keeps coming at us.

It is right to have our hearts broken by what is happening around us, but it is also right to celebrate the goodness, faithfulness and greatness of our God and what he has done among us.

In Revelation 19: 6-7, we have to ask ourselves an important question:

“Then I heard what sounded like a great multitude, like the roar of rushing waters and like loud peals of thunder, shouting:

“Hallelujah!

For our Lord God Almighty reigns.

Let us rejoice and be glad

and give him glory!

*For the wedding of the Lamb has come,
and his bride has made herself ready.”*

We must ask ourselves, have we lost our heart of celebration? This celebration will be loud and active, full of shouts and dancing; will we feel out of place?

“There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens: a time to be born and a time to die, a time to plant and a time to uproot, a time to kill and a time to heal, a time to tear down and a time to build, a time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to mourn and a time to dance.” (Ecclesiastes 3:1-4)

In the celebration in Nehemiah’s time, the sacred and the secular came together through them, with God.

“I had the leaders of Judah go up on top of the wall. I also assigned two large choirs to give thanks. One was to proceed on top of the wall to the right, toward the Dung Gate.” (Nehemiah 12:31)

Maybe Nehemiah was remembering what Tobiah said earlier;

“Tobiah the Ammonite, who was at his side, said, “What they are building—even a fox climbing up on it would break down their wall of stones!” (Nehemiah 4:3)

They were told they couldn’t do it, but Nehemiah breaks into loud celebration when the wall was complete. The roar of the celebration could be heard a long way away.

“And on that day they offered great sacrifices, rejoicing because God had given them great joy. The women and children also rejoiced. The sound of rejoicing in Jerusalem could be heard far away.” (Nehemiah 12:43)

CELEBRATION IS A PROPHETIC DECLARATION TO THE WORLD ABOUT THE NATURE AND GOODNESS OF GOD.

We don’t have to contrive anything, but a statement of his victory in our situation. For us today, it is a celebration of his victory or death, hell and the grave.

“But thanks be to God, who always leads us as captives in Christ’s triumphal procession and uses us to spread the aroma of the knowledge of him everywhere. For we are to God the pleasing aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing.” (2 Corinthians 2:14-15)

This is about marking the moment of God’s working in our lives.

“His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms...” (Ephesians 3:10)

They were celebrating and worshipping and it was heard in neighboring cities, but it’s much more than that. We “just sing songs” (like them), it’s that same loud sound that could be heard a far off, but the reality is it can be heard in the spiritual realm. We have no idea the affect that our worship and celebrating has around us.

"I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete." (John 15:11)

We will have tribulation, but we will have joy; heaven even rejoices over those who repent and turn to God.

"I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent." (Luke 15:7)

Maybe you weren't celebrated when you were young, or you were not taught to celebrate. He wants to show us how to have a joyous celebration. God's wants us to and desires that we not only celebrate at the milestones, but also at the moments in our lives!

DISCIPLINE YOURSELF TO CELEBRATE.

"The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives

and release from darkness for the prisoners, to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn, and provide for those who grieve in Zion—to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of joy instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair.

They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the LORD for the display of his splendor. They will rebuild the ancient ruins

and restore the places long devastated; they will renew the ruined cities that have been devastated for generations. Strangers will shepherd your flocks; foreigners will work your fields and vineyards.

And you will be called priests of the LORD, you will be named ministers of our God. You will feed on the wealth of nations, and in their riches you will boast. Instead of your shame you will receive a double portion, and instead of disgrace you will rejoice in your inheritance. And so you will inherit a double portion in your land, and everlasting joy will be yours." (Isaiah 61:1-7)

REMOVE OBSTACLES TO CELEBRATION

Don't allow yourself to become jaded or crusty, looking at someone who is celebrating before the Lord, wondering why they are being so animated, loud or exuberant. Let's be like our God, who the scripture says "sings over us".

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. In the introduction to this lesson, Randy pointed out that it is much easier to see and accomplish the re-building of a physical wall. But the more important and difficult work that God was doing was, renewing the faith of a broken down people. Please discuss what this means and how you have seen this in your own lives or the life of another.
2. What do think about this quote; "Sitting in the shadow of ruins, it's easy to think; "this is how it will always be". What do you read in Nehemiah 6:15-16 that addresses this way of feeling and thinking?
3. The wall was finished, Nehemiah was faced with a decision he could have "kept the momentum going", but he stopped everything. He marked the accomplishment and initiated a celebration. How important are celebrations? How does it affect our hearts? What does the O.T., N.T. and the beginning of Jesus ministry tell us about this issue?
4. As we consider the glimpse of our eternal home in Revelation 19, what are your thoughts of this robust celebration? Also have you asked yourself have I lost my heart for celebration? If so, what or who has taken it away and can we believe God to restore it for us?
5. What does this phrase mean to you? "Celebration is a prophetic declaration to the world about the nature and goodness of God?"
6. "God's wants us to and desires that we not only celebrate at the milestones, but also at the moments in our lives" What is the difference between "milestones" and "moments"?

